

7th Sunday of Easter

““Your precious calling to eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1 Peter 5:10-11)

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 7th Sunday of Easter is from our epistle reading, 1 Peter 5:10-11

“10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Our text has some good news and some great news for us. The great news? God has called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus! He has brought you and me, who have received the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, into His sheepfold – converted you and me, who were lost wayward sheep, and made you His special people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, ...called you out of darkness into His marvelous light! ...who once had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy!

As we have been walking through Peter’s first epistle this Eastertide, we’ve heard these glorious truths in chapter 2. In fact, as you remember Peter began his epistle with very similar words to our text in chapter 1. Our text looks like the other bookend to what Peter wrote in chapter 1. What did he say in the opening verses?

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Incorruptible inheritance! Doesn’t fade away! Reserved in heaven for you! In short, you’ve been called to eternal glory! That’s the great news because Jesus suffered, died and rose again for our salvation.

What’s the good news? Well, it’s actually great news also even though we sometimes don’t think of it as good news. **“After you have suffered a while”**, Peter says in our text.

And you know what? Peter said the same thing in chapter 1. So ,this shouldn't catch us by surprise.

“6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,”

We have a living hope, a sure hope of glory, a foretaste of our future great glory in heaven. A hope, as we heard last week, that we should be ready to defend and share with anybody and everybody who wants to know the reason you have this hope -a hope that becomes all the more visible and apparent to the world in ...the midst of our suffering.

You see, a weak faith in God, when tested in suffering, immediately says, “God doesn't like me. Why me? This isn't fair. I don't deserve this because I've done so many good things... you fill in the blank. A weak faith, doesn't rejoice in suffering but rejects it and is angered by it.

That's why it's so good for all of us to hear in our epistle reading what Peter says about our suffering in this world. It universal among the brotherhood! Don't be surprised by it. It's not a strange thing that's happening to you as if you're the only one God is singling out. No, it's a given that as followers of Jesus, you will also participate in His sufferings.

In this week's daily Lutheran Hour devotions, Dr. Kari Vo on Wednesday titled her devotion, “Don't be surprised”.

She says, “In the early days of my family's ministry with the Vietnamese, I had a silly idea in the back of my head. We kept dealing with disaster after disaster—illnesses, car accidents, fights in the church, funding problems—and I kept saying to myself, “Next week will be better. Next month, everything will go smoothly, the way it's supposed to go!”

After about twenty years, I finally caught on. This—a life full of trouble and suffering—is normal ministry, not something strange or unusual. We live in a world broken by sin and oppressed by the work of the devil, and really, how could it be any other way? Jesus hasn't come back in glory yet. And in the meantime, we suffer.”

Our text uses the word “After”. The sufferings come first and afterwards the glory. In the Greek there isn’t even a word “after”. It’s just assumed that **“having suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”** In a general sense, isn’t that what we teach our children and live by? After you do your chores, you can do the fun thing that you want to do. After, you do your homework, then you can play. After you’ve saved enough money by withholding buying things that might give you immediate enjoyment, you can buy something of greater value.

So, let’s take a moment and see how God uses our sufferings for good.

First, Peter says that **“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”**

As you are reproached as a Christian the Holy Spirit gives rest to your soul that you are a chosen generation, loved by God, a forgiven child of God who is honored to participate in the sufferings of the One who has saved you and promised you His future glory! The Spirit of glory holds our eternal glory before our eyes as we pass through the trials of this life. And not only that, but He refreshes you. That’s what happened in Acts 5 when the disciples were beaten, thrown into prison and forbidden to preach Christ. They became even stronger in their faith and rejoicing.

Second, our sufferings give glory to Christ. So our epistle says, **“On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.”**

And thirdly, God uses our suffering to humble us so that we keep our focus on Christ and not be distracted by the glories that the Satan, our adversary, the roaring lion, puts before us. He wants us to deny Jesus and blame Him for our suffering. When the exact opposite is true.

Our sufferings remind us that we deserve eternal punishment for our sins. And if it were not for His grace and mercy we would be eternally lost. So Peter says in chapter 4:

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

Oh, indeed it is a good thing, a great thing that God uses our sufferings in this world to refine our faith and keep us in the Gospel. It is His gracious will and doing as Peter goes on to say.

“19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”

And finally, our God of all grace, promises us that our suffering is just for a “little while”. So Peter said in the opening verses of the epistle and he bookends that thought in our text.

When we look at the big picture of how short our lives are compared to the eternal glory, the suffering pales doesn't it?

Paul says in Romans 8:18 **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”**

Our time in the present is so short. A doctor told me this week that he just turned 55. He was lamenting how quickly he's gotten older, but at least he gets a free coffee at Whataburger, he joked.

I was watching a commercial on TV this week and in order to let the public know how trustworthy it was, it said that it was founded in 1962. 60 years it's been in business, so you can count on it. Then I realized, 1962, that's my birth year. That makes me pretty old when companies look back on it as their founding year! Yes, time goes quickly. But, God leaves us with one more great piece of news as we pass through the years.

He will see you through to the end and “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”

God Himself will repair and perfect that which is broken in our lives. He will strengthen that which is weak. He will build us on Jesus the Chief Cornerstone and settle us strongly on Him alone!

As Paul says in Philippians 1:6:

“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

Again, as Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24:

“23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”

He will do it! What a promise! He will bring us to eternal glory! Oh, how precious is our calling, our eternal calling, even now as we rejoice in the sufferings that are our common lot in the brotherhood. If we didn't have these sufferings, that would mean that God didn't care about us. But He doesn't let us wander on our own to be lost forever. But, in the midst of our sufferings, God invites us every day to:

“humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-7)

Indeed, we conclude with Peter... **“To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”**

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)